

September 2, 2005

The Local Government and Urban Policy Committee

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Dear Committee Members,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide input regarding the change in legislation that would allow Menominee County access to using a Wisconsin Licensed Physician as Medical Examiner for the County. I had hoped to address you personally, but scheduling conflicts would not allow me to be present.

Menominee County is located on the southern most part of the Upper Peninsula on the Wisconsin Border. Menominee, Michigan and Marinette, Wisconsin for many years operated separate hospital facilities. In approximately 1980 the two hospitals merged to form Bay Area Medical Center, and by 1985 all of the medical operations were located in Marinette, Wisconsin. One of the main reasons for this was the more physician friendly environment that Wisconsin provided regarding malpractice issues. As a result there are few practicing Michigan licensed physicians in our community.

We were notified over a year ago, that our Medical Examiner of 20 years decided that it was time to give up the position. Dr. Paul Haupt, who has served our community from his clinic in Menominee with distinction, provided what we all felt was adequate notice of his desire to leave. Upon his notice I began to advertise and recruit a Michigan Licensed physician to replace him as Medical Examiner. We found interest from only 2 individuals, one who resides in our community but works in Dickinson County, and a second who works on a part time basis. An interview panel consisting of myself, and the investigators of the local city police department, and sheriff's department, and one of the

current deputy medical examiners, met with these individuals and quite candidly found that one would just not be an appropriate hire for the position, and found the others financial demands that would have doubled the expense of the office for our county unacceptable. We have continued to talk to the one other licensed physician in our area who just has not shown any interest in the position because of the demands of her practice. After over a year of searching and recruiting we still do not have a replacement that will allow Dr. Haupt to retire from the position.

I spoke with both of our neighboring counties of Delta and Dickinson with the hopes of a shared arrangement, however the increased workload to those counties positions proved to be unworkable. At this time Dr. Haupt agreed to continue on an interim basis, and I contacted Representative Casperson with the hope of being able to do something legislatively that would allow us to draw a physician licensed in Wisconsin to serve as our medical examiner. At this time Representative Casperson and his staff worked on language, which we believe will allow the issue to be resolved.

I have spoken to the Chief Operating Officer at Bay Area Medical Center, and I have been assured that there are physicians on staff who would be interested in the position, as well as a possible contract arrangement with the Hospital to provide the service if necessary.

I would ask this committee to support Menominee County, and Rep. Casperson's legislation to use all community resources to provide the best service to the citizens of Menominee County in a fiscally responsible manner.

I would like to thank each of you for taking the time to address this issue, which is very important to Menominee County, and it's residents. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 906-863-7779.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Neumeier
Menominee County Administrator